



News Release

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Samish Bay shellfish harvest closed due to high fecal bacteria in Samish River

OLYMPIA — The state Department of Health has temporarily closed Samish Bay to shellfish harvesting because of high levels of fecal bacteria from the Samish River. When the numbers of fecal coliform bacteria are high, the bay is closed to assure that contaminated shellfish are not marketed.

The state health agency's Shellfish Program says this closure shows there's more work to do to correct the pollution problems that have affected Samish Bay. Samish Bay is currently classified as "Conditionally Approved," because it is periodically closed due to fecal pollution when the Samish River rises quickly.

The Shellfish Program will continue to collect and test water samples, and will reopen shellfish harvests when results improve. Past closures have lasted a few days. Local and state agencies, residents, and volunteers have been working for three years to eliminate the temporary closures of Samish Bay. That would lead state health officials to change the classification to "Approved."

State health officials say the bay could be upgraded to "Approved" if there is only one pollution closure between March 1 and June 30. Another closure this spring would confirm that more work needs to be done to identify and correct pollution problems.

Skagit County, Skagit Conservation District, the Departments of Ecology and Agriculture, residents and volunteers are continuing to identify pollution problems and get them fixed.

The [Department of Health website](http://www.doh.wa.gov) (www.doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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